

HYDRO BLOCK FACT SHEET

SUMMER 1969 - SPRING 1970

Ontario Hydro assembles block bounded by Beverley, Cecil, Henry and Baldwin Sts. with the intention of tearing down the 42 houses situated there and putting up a 16 storey transformer and switching station. Hydro paid approximately \$2,283,200.00 for the land assembly at an average cost of \$50,000 per house. At least one house went for \$110,000 to Hydro in 1970. The same house had been sold in December, 1964 for \$33,500.

APRIL 1970

Hydro approaches City Planning re: a lane closing which is required before they can proceed with the transformer. The Planning Board feels that the proposed transformer is incompatible with the neighbourhood and defers the decision until Hydro proves the necessity of using this site. Because of City Planning's stand Hydro cannot begin construction. Although they don't demolish any of the houses they do issue eviction notices and board up the houses as they are vacated. A letter is sent to Hydro on behalf of the Chinese Canadian Association and the Grange Park Residents Assoc. requesting that evictions be halted and that more houses be opened up. A delegation from the McCaul St. Memorial Co-op made up of the tenants who were being evicted from the Block approaches Hydro with an offer to rent all 42 houses doing their own renovations and maintenance at a cost of \$18,000 - \$20,000 per house and to spread the mortgage over their time of occupancy. Hydro turns down the offer as unworkable, estimating that renovations would cost between \$100,000 and \$125,000 (1) per house. They also add that it is financially unfeasible because it is "a social experiment without any Hydro control". (As the elevators had been purposely shut down at the Hydro Building, the delegation was forced to walk up 15 flights of steps under the watchful gaze of the numerous O.P.P. who just happened to be in the area).

SPRING 1970

Hydro officially announces plans for transformer. Grange Park residents begin fight against plan because of the demolition of valuable rehabilitable low cost housing and the incompatibility of the transformer with the predominantly low-rise residential character of the surrounding community.

JUNE 1970

Hydro refurbishes up to minimum City standards 24 houses at a cost of \$80,000 and makes half available to Metro Social Services and the other half to Chinese Associations with rents being paid to Hydro.

SEPTEMBER 1970-APRIL 1971

Hydro continues negotiations with City Planning Board for lane closing. City still delays decision due to strong local opposition and original planning considerations.

(1) reference: June 18, 1970 - News release of McCaul St. Memorial Co-op

MAY 1971 Planning Board finally concedes to Hydro re lane closing . Hydro despite increasing citizen opposition, decides to proceed with construction as planned.

AUGUST 1971 Ten Days before the Provincial election, Hon. Allan Grossman, with the support of Premier Davis instructs Ontario Hydro to relocate the transformer and to turn the Block over to OHC which would rehabilitate it in a form compatible with its surrounding low-rise residential context.

APRIL, 1972 A number of groups approach Grossman indicating how they would like to see the Block developed; each with personal interests in mind. Grossman refuses to deal with the groups individually and suggests that a Working Committee be established consisting of all the interested parties with whom he and OHC would then work to resolve the future of the Block. Working Committee set up consisting of representatives from the following groups: Grange Park Residents Assoc. Chinese Community Centre, University Settlement House, Chinese Presbyterian Church, Chinese Canadian Assoc., Baldwin St. Merchants, Metro Chinese Centre, Mon Sheong Foundation.

APRIL - NOVEMBER 1972 Regular monthly meetings of Hydro Block Working Committee. During the same period the Research Committee set up as a subcommittee of the Working Committee, produced specific program of area needs for the block. Hydro Block Tenants Assoc. also holds regular meetings.

SEPTEMBER 1972 The Hydro Block Working Committee takes the position that land write down is the only way Block can be retained for similar socio-economic group as now resides there.

AS OF OCTOBER 1972 17 houses boarded up, 24 occupied, 12 are being used by Metro Social Services and 12 by the Chinese Associations.

NOVEMBER 1972 The architectural firm of Diamond & Myers is retained by OHC as planning consultants for the Block. The Working Committee supports this decision.

DECEMBER 1972 Adoption by the Working Committee of a 14 point policy statement for the Block (Appendix I).

JANUARY 1973 OHC acquires title to the Block. Price: approximately \$2,000,000.00 plus overhead, interest and incidental expenses incurred by Hydro while maintaining the houses.

FEBRUARY 1973 The Hydro Block Working Committee meets with the Hon. Allan Grossman. The following points are made at that time:

1. The carrying cost of the Block is \$600.00 per day.
2. The future of the Block must be resolved by May 31, 1973
3. A Technical Steering Committee should be set-up consisting of 2 Grange area members of Hydro Block Working Committee, 3 OHC officials, 1 CMHC officia, 2 Ward Aldermen, 1 member of the City Development Dept., 1 member of the Planning Board staff.

...

FEBRUARY 1973 cont.      Their task is to review plans put forward by Diamond & Myers and decide upon the actual nature of the Block's redevelopment.

APRIL 1973                Six schemes presented by Diamond & Myers.

MAY 1973                  All schemes being presented indicate that the rents to be charged are going to be extremely high and even with the OHC subsidy (maximum \$150.00 per unit) the Block would not end up accomodating the kind of people the Working Committee wishes to serve.  
A land write down, again brought up as the only viable means of accomplishing the objectives for the Block.

MAY 31, 1973              Future of Block to have been resolved

JUNE 1973                 Members of the Working Committee appear before City Council to request support to a write down of land if necessary. City refuses to get involved in the affairs of the other levels of government.

JULY 1973                Letter sent to Hon. Allan Grossman by the Working Committee regarding delays on construction, the increased costs being incurred and the fact that the May 31st deadline had long past.

OCTOBER 1973             Scheme 5 selected :(this involves the rehabilitation of the Beverley St. houses and new construction on Henry and Cecil Sts not exceeding 3½ storeys in height.  
153 units - 3,698 sq. ft. commerical space at grade  
2,613 sq. ft. commercial space below grade  
1.5 times coverage  
39 bachelor units  
58 - 1 bedrooms  
18 - 2 bedrooms  
18 - 3 bedrooms  
12 - 4 bedrooms  
5 - 5 bedrooms  
3 - 6 bedrooms  
Diamond and Myers chosen as the architects. Homeownership, for now, rejected as infeasible due to high land costs. The architects are advised to design some units so as to make them adoptable to Homeownership option if approved in the future. Assurance given by OHC that all other things being equal, area residents would be given priority back onto the Block.

OCTOBER 1973             Hon. Allan Grossman appears before the Legislature stating that he "hopes it will be possible" to begin the renovative process within a matter of 3 to 4 months and to begin new construction in the Spring.

JANUARY 1974             OHC rejects phasing on construction as it would be uneconomical resulting in a delay of 6 - 9 months and an added cost of \$154,000.00. A new construction starting date set:  
1. rehabilitation July 1974  
2. New building January 1975

.....



AUGUST 1974

Rehabilitation to have begun. Still no activity

MAY 1974 - MARCH 1975

The relocation of existing tenants from the Block continues, more houses are boarded up.

JANUARY 1975

New construction to have begun. Still nothing

FEBRUARY 1975

Technical Steering Committee Meeting at which OHC indicates that they are unable to proceed with developing the Block because CMHC has made substantial budget cuts to Public Housing for 1975. They had made an offer to turn it over to City Non-Profit but no definite answer has been forthcoming. OHC under this arrangement, could lease the land to City Non-Profit and thereby remove the land costs from the total. Hydro Block Working Committee is sceptical about City Non-Profit takeover. The feeling is that the objectives for the Block would not be realized under City Non-Profit (e.g. 75% rent supplement) and the Working Committee does not want to become involved in a whole series of lengthy re-negotiations with another body.

MARCH 1975

Working Committee members appear before the Building and Development Committee to ask that OHC be advised to stop negotiations with City Non-Profit unless City Non-Profit is prepared to adopt the principles for the Block worked up through the lengthy negotiations of the Hydro Block Working Committee and Technical Steering Committee. This was referred to U.R.F.H.L. however, from the discussions at Building and Development we got the impression that it would be rejected.

Technical Steering Committee meeting held at which write down proposal considered seriously as most desirable alternative. Decision made to proceed immediately with a write down request through OHC to the Cabinet; at the same time OHC will make application for funding based on present costs to CMHC.

Hydro Block Working Committee members meet with Mike Cassidy (NDP housing critic) to muster support to write down proposal.

Margaret Campbell (Liberal MPP) approached for support to write down proposal and agrees to a mini-caucus meeting to discuss it.

Working Committee members meet with Scott MacDonald (Regional Manager, CMHC) to question actual funding situation re Hydro Block. MacDonald made the following 2 points:

1. OHC has never officially applied to CMHC for funding
2. CMHC will not participate with costs as they are (OHC has informally discussed costs with them) Cabinet allocates another \$30 million to Public Housing.

....

APRIL 1975

Members of the Hydro Block Working Committee requested permission to appear before OHC Board of Directors and Board of Management to push for a write down.

Hydro Block Working Committee sends letter to Donald Irvine, Minister of Housing, to request meeting with key officials from the three parties and OHC to discuss the Hydro Block situation before the write down proposal comes officially before the Legislature.

Wes Lore, Chairman  
Hydro Block Working Committee  
Kay Parsons, Vice Chairman

From files provided by  
Kay Parsons to  
Ceta Ramkhalansingh